(b) and (c) There is wide divergence in the views among the State Government regarding the formula. In general, while the advanced States prefer higher weightage in the Formula for performance, the less advanced States have sought higher weightage for backwardness. Hence the Full Planning Commission in its meeting held on 27th and 29th June, 2001 and discussed *inter-alia* the issue of revision of Gadgil Formula and in view of the divergence of the views among the State Governments and the sensitivity of this issue, it was decided that it would be necessary to discuss this further and evolve a consensus before alternatives are considered by the National Development Council (NDC).

(d) to (f) The Planning Commission follows a uniform methodology for estimation of poverty across all the States. The present method used by the Planning Commission for estimation of poverty is based on the methodology recommended by the Expert Group on 'Estimation of Proportion and Number of Poor' (Lakdawala Committee). The Expert Group, which was constituted in September 1989 submitted its Report to the Planning Commission in July 1993. A full Planning Commission meeting chaired by the Prime Minister in March, 1997 accepted the recommendations of the Expert Group with minor modifications. Since then the estimates of poverty at national and State level are being made using the expert group methodology.

Downsizing of Assam Government

1047. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Planning Commission has suggested a drastic downsize in the Assam Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof and reasons therefor;

(c) whether the suggestion was made after prior consultation with the State Government; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor and the State Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI SATYABRATA MOOKHERJEE) (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. During the Plan discussions for the Tenth Plan (2002—07) and Annual Plan 2002-2003,

both Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission and Chief Minister, Assam expressed their concern over the committed expenses on salaries, wages, pensions and interest payments of State, which are more than the entire revenue receipts of the State from all sources. As such, the Government of Assam was requested to downsize the administration, outsource services, increase revenue mobilization and restructure finances to improve the fiscal situation of the State. Consequently, the Government of Assam has stopped virtually all large scale recruitments and submitted VRS schemes for employees of the Cooperative Societies, Assam State Transport Corporation, Power Department and for the employees of certain PSUs. These VRS schemes have since been approved by the Planning Commission.

Development of rivers and waterways in NER

1048. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Planning Commission has recommended development of rivers and waterways in the North Eastern Region to spur economic growth;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the cost involved in the development programme and funding scheme thereof; and

(c) by when preliminary survey of the project etc. is likely to be initiated.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI SATYABRATA MOOKHERJEE): (a) to (c) In pursuance of the Prime Minister's announcement of New initiatives for the North-Eastern Region made at Guwahati on October 27, 1996, the Planning Commission set up a High Level Commission under Shri S.P. Shukla, Member, Planning Commission to critically examine the backlog in respect of Basic Minimum Services and gaps in infrastructure sectors for development of States in North-Eastern Region. The recommendations of the High Level Commission, in its report of March 1997, *inter-alia* cover the sectors of irrigation, flood control, hydropower and inland water transport for development of rivers and waterways. The Union Government through its various agencies has since taken several steps for development of water sources in the North-Eastern region like formulating a Centrally Sponsored